



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**CONGENITAL KYPHOSIS AND KYPHOSCOLIOSIS: THE NATURAL  
HISTORY AND RESULTS AFTER SURGERY**

**HARWANT SINGH**

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**CONGENITAL KYPHOSIS AND KYPHOSCOLIOSIS : THE NATURAL  
HISTORY AND RESULTS AFTER SURGERY**

**By**

**HARWANT SINGH**

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

**October 2000**



## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, to whom I owe everything; and to my wife, who put up with my nuances while I was doing this study.

It is also dedicated to the late Professor N. Subramaniam of the University of Malaya, and the late Professor Q.M. Iqbal of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; who were the pioneers of scoliosis surgery in Malaysia, and who taught me that treating children's spinal deformities is a life long passion and not just a vocation.

Lastly, but by no means least; this is also dedicated to all the spinal deformity patients who have given me the opportunity to treat them, and who have taught me so much more than any book, conference or meeting; and have given me valuable insight into what spinal deformity is.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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**Chairman: Professor Dr Leslie Lai Chin Loy**

**Faculty: Medicine and Health Sciences**

Congenital kyphosis and kyphoscoliosis are due to vertebral anomalies that are present at birth. These vertebral anomalies cause a deformity of the spine in the sagittal plane. If allowed to progress, this deformity can produce neural dysfunction due to bowstringing of the cord over the apex of the deformity. The goals of this study were to document the natural history of congenital kyphosis and kyphoscoliosis and to determine the stage at which the natural history should be interrupted by treatment. This was done by reviewing the medical records and radiographs of the spine of 112 consecutive patients. Sixty eight patients had a type-I kyphosis due to anterior failure of vertebral-body formation, twenty-four had a type-II kyphosis due to anterior failure of vertebral-body segmentation, and twelve had a type-III kyphosis due to a combination of anomalies. The deformities of the remaining eight patients could not be classified. The apex of kyphosis was seen at all

levels but was most frequent between the tenth thoracic and the first lumbar level (seventy-four patients; 66%). Progression of the curve was most rapid during the adolescent growth spurt and only stopped at skeletal maturity. Progression was most rapid and the magnitude of the curve was the greatest in the type-III kyphosis (twelve patients) followed by type-I kyphosis due to posterolateral quadrant vertebra (thirty-nine patients), a posterior hemivertebra (eight patients), a butterfly vertebra (fifteen patients), and a wedge vertebra (six patients). A kyphosis due to two adjacent type-I vertebral anomalies progressed more rapidly and produced a more severe deformity than a single similar anomaly. The prognosis for type-II kyphosis was variable and was much more severe when an anterolateral unsegmented bar had produced a kyphoscoliosis (nine patients) than when a midline anterior bar had produced a pure kyphosis (fifteen patients), which usually progressed slowly. Sixty-five patients had surgical treatment. The stability of the sagittal curve at maturity was dependent on vertebral anomaly causing sagittal deformity, type of arthrodesis procedure performed, age of patient at arthrodesis and size of sagittal curve at arthrodesis, however only the first two were statistically significant.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KYPHOSIS DAN KYPHOSCOLIOSIS KONGENITAL: RIWAYAT  
SEMULAJADI DAN KESIMPULAN SURGERI**

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2

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Kyphosis dan kyphoscoliosis kongenital adalah disebabkan oleh malformasi vertebra yang wujud dari lahir. Malformasi ini menyebabkan deformiti spina di plana sagital. Jika deformiti ini berterusan, saraf tunjang boleh dikepil oleh apex deformiti menyebabkan kehilangan fungsi neural. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti kejadian deformiti ini, dan mengesyorkan rumusan untuk rawatan penyakit ini. Kajian telah dijalankan dengan penelitian nota-nota perubatan dan radiograf-radiograf spina 112 pesakit konsekutif. Enam puluh lapan pesakit mengalami kyphosis Jenis 1, dua puluh empat mengalami kyphosis Jenis 2, dan dua belas mengalami kyphosis Jenis 3. Baki lapan pesakit tidak dapat diklassifikasikan.

Apeks kyphosis di lihat di semua tahap, tetapi didapati sering diantara vertebra thorasik kesepuluh dan vertebra lumbar pertama (tujuh puluh empat pesakit; 66%). Kepecutan deformiti ini adalah terlaju semasa waktu baligh dan hanya berhenti selepas kebalighan rangka tercapai. Kepecutan deformiti ini adalah terlaju dan magnitud deformiti adalah terbesar di kyphosis Jenis 3. Kyphosis yang disebabkan oleh dua anomali vertebra bersampingan mempunyai kepecutan deformiti yang lebih laju; dan menyebabkan deformiti yang lebih besar magnitud berbanding dengan anomali satu vertebra sahaja. Prognosis kyphosis Jenis 2 adalah lebih baik dengan kepecutan deformiti yang kurang dari Jenis 1 atau 3.

Enam puluh lima pesakit telah menjalankan rawatan pembedahan. Stabiliti deformiti pada waktu baligh adalah bergantung kepada jenis anomali vertebra yang menyebabkan deformiti sagital, jenis artrodesis yang dijalankan, umur pesakit pada waktu pembedahan dijalankan dan saiz deformiti pada masa pembedahan; tetapi hanya faktor pertama dan kedua adalah signifikan.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 30 October 2000 to conduct the final examination of Harwant Singh on his Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “Congenital Kyphosis and Kyphoscoliosis: The Natural History And Results After Surgery” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulation 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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Date: 11 JAN 2001

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



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Harwant Singh,

Date: 12 November 2000

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
APPROVAL SHEETS	ix
DECLARATION FORM	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	xx

## CHAPTER

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1	General	1
1.2	Historical Perspective	3
1.3	Prevalence of Congenital Kyphosis and Kyphoscoliosis and its Significance	5
1.4	Hypothesis and Research Objectives	11

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1	Embryology and Classification of the Vertebral Defect Causing Kyphosis and Kyphoscoliosis	13
2.2	Previous Natural History Studies	17
2.3	Previous Treatment Studies	19
2.4	The Problem of Respiratory Capacity in Severe Spinal Deformity	21
2.5	Neurological Deficit in Congenital Kyphosis and the Relationship of Sagittal Plane Deformity to Neural Structures	25
2.6	Methods of Quantifying Sagittal Plane Deformities and their Inadequacies	30
2.7	Animal Models in Congenital Kyphosis	31
2.8	Other Anomalies Associated with Congenital Kyphosis	32
2.9	Genetics of Congenital Kyphosis	34

## **3 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

3.1	Overview of Methodology	35
3.2	Measuring Technique for Cobb and Modified Cobb Method	38
3.3	The Radius of Curvature Method	39
3.4	Data Recording and Statistical Analysis	42
3.5	Validation of the Methodology	43

## **4 RESULTS**

### **A : NATURAL HISTORY**

4.1	Epidemiology	44
4.2	Classification of Vertebral Anomalies	47
4.3	Rib Patterns	51
4.4	Neurology	53
4.5	Ventilatory Capacity	57
4.6	Cardiovascular Abnormalities	59
4.7	Renal Abnormalities	60
4.8	Skin and Subcutaneous Stigmata	61
4.9	Other Vertebral and Axial Skeletal Abnormalities	62
4.10	Appendicular Skeletal and Other Visceral Abnormalities	64
4.11	Influence of Family History	66

### **B : CURVE CHARACTERISTICS AND PROGRESSION**

4.12	Anatomical Description in Relation to Curve Characteristics	67
4.13	The Apical Qualities in Congenital Kyphosis and Kyphoscoliosis	84
4.14	Progression of Untreated Curves	87
4.15	Neurological Deficit During Natural Progression of Curve	117
4.16	Comparison between Cobb Method and Radius of Curvature Method in Severe Sagittal Plane Deformities	118

## **C : SURGERY**

4.17	Introduction	127
4.18	Types of Surgery Performed and Results	130
4.19	The Effect of Vertebral Type Undergoing Arthrodesis and Stability at Maturity	144
4.20	The Effect of Type of Arthrodesis Procedure and Stability at Maturity	146
4.21	The Effect of Age at Arthrodesis and Stability at Maturity	148
4.22	The Effect of Size at Arthrodesis and Stability at Maturity	150
4.23	The Results of Surgery in Neurologically Compromised Patients	152
4.24	Level of Fusion Performed	154
4.25	Complications of Surgery	154
4.26	Biomechanics of Surgical Procedures.	155

## **5 DISCUSSION**

5.1	Natural history	164
5.2	Neurological Symptoms	173
5.3	Intraspinal Anomalies	175
5.4	Surgery for Congenital Kyphosis and Kyphoscoliosis	177

## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 185**

BIBLIOGRAPHY	190
BIODATA OF AUTHOR	226





## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Data on the untreated patients who had spontaneous neurological deficit	56
Table 2: Respiratory data	58
Table 3: Number of vertebrae in relation to vertebral-body anomaly	63
Table 4: Rate of progression of untreated curves	116
Table 5: Cobb's angle and radius of curvature in patients with no neurological deficit	123
Table 6: Cobb's angle and radius of curvature in patients with neurological deficits	124
Table 7: The level of apices and type of vertebral anomaly in patients with neurology	126
Table 8: Immediate correction achieved after surgery in the different types of procedures	143
Table 9: The effect of vertebral type undergoing arthrodesis and stability at maturity	145
Table 10: The effect of type of arthrodesis procedure and stability at maturity	147
Table 11: The effect of age at arthrodesis and stability at maturity	149
Table 12: The effect of curve size at arthrodesis and stability at maturity	151
Table 13: Results of surgery in neurologically compromised patients	153



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Kyphosis at thoraco-lumbar level	2
Figure 2: Deformity in sagittal and coronal planes of spine, ribs removed to show spinal column	6
Figure 3: Deformity in axial plane viewed easily from the back of a patient who is bending forwards	7
Figure 4: Sagittal cut through kyphosis specimen and sagittal MRI cut illustrating the apex compressing on anterior spinal cord	10
Figure 5: Severe curvature of spine with reduced thoracic space causing restriction in lung expansion	22
Figure 6: Severe spinal deformity causing restriction of lung expansion	23
Figure 7: Crowding of ribs in kyphoscoliosis	24
Figure 8: Sagittal cut through specimen with kyphosis	27
Figure 9: Ribs removed to show sharp angular kyphosis at thoraco-lumbar junction	28
Figure 10: Schematic diagram of hemivertebra at apex	29
Figure 11: The kyphosis template, and points of reference for template	40
Figure 12: The template used on the reference points on the radiograph	41
Figure 13: Schematic outline of study design	46
Figure 14: TYPE I: Anterior failure of vertebral-body formation	48
Figure 15: TYPE II: Anterior failure of vertebral-body segmentation	49
Figure 16: TYPE III: Mixed	50
Figure 17: Rib patterns	52
Figure 18: Histogram showing level of apex and number of patients who had spontaneous neurological deficit	55
Figure 19: TYPE I posterolateral quadrant hemivertebra causing kyphoscoliosis	70
Figure 20: TYPE I: Butterfly (Sagittal cleft) vertebra	73
Figure 21: TYPE I: Anterolateral wedged vertebra causing kyphoscoliosis	75
Figure 22: TYPE II: Anterior failure of segmentation with kyphosis	77

Figure 23: TYPE II: Anterior failure of segmentation. The relationship between disc space and severity of deformity	78
Figure 24: TYPE III: Mixed type	81
Figure 25: Graph showing the different types of vertebral defects, their apical location, as well as the number of vertebral levels	83
Figure 26: Cord compression in congenital kyphosis and its relationship to the radius of curvature	86
Figure 27: TYPE I : Posterolateral quadrant hemivertebra with myelogram showing compression in anterior cord by apex	89
Figure 28: TYPE I : Posterolateral quadrant hemivertebra with myelogram showing high compression and paraparesis	90
Figure 29: TYPE I : Posterolateral quadrant hemivertebra causing kyphoscoliosis. Incarcerated hemivertebra.	91
Figure 30: TYPE I: Sagittal cleft (Butterfly) vertebra	96
Figure 31: TYPE I: Sagittal cleft (Butterfly) vertebra	97
Figure 32: TYPE I: Sagittal cleft (Butterfly) vertebra	98
Figure 33: TYPE I: Wedge Vertebra	100
Figure 34: TYPE I: Wedge Vertebra	101
Figure 35: TYPE I: Wedge Vertebra	102
Figure 36: TYPE II: Anterior failure of segmentation	105
Figure 37: TYPE II: Anterior failure of segmentation	106
Figure 38: TYPE II: Anterior failure of segmentation	107
Figure 39: TYPE II: Anterolateral failure of segmentation with kyphoscoliosis	109
Figure 40: TYPE III	111
Figure 41: TYPE III. Vertebral body defect	112
Figure 42: Unclassified	114
Figure 43: Unclassified	115
Figure 44: MRI of kyphosis showing possible vertebral anomaly	122
Figure 45: Relationship of sagittal vertebral anomalies and radius of curvature	125
Figure 46: TYPE I: Posterior hemivertebra causing kyphosis	136
Figure 47: TYPE III: Progression of curve	141
Figure 48: TYPE III: Progression of curve	142
Figure 49: Sagittal weight bearing axis of spine and the forces that act to maintain equilibrium of the spinal column	158
Figure 50: Congenital vertebral anomalies and the direction of vertebral growth causing kyphosis	159

Figure 51: Relationship of moments acting on grafts in front of the spinal column	160
Figure 52: Relationship of levels of posterior fusions and the moments acting on the apex	161
Figure 53: Relationship of curve severity to moments acting on the apex	162
Figure 54: Summary of key biomechanical factors in kyphosis correction	163
Figure 55: The relationship between various vertebral anomalies and the radius of curvature	189

## GLOSSARY

### ABBREVIATIONS

**MRI** – Magnetic Resonance Imaging

**FVC** – Forced Vital Capacity

**FEV1** – Forced Expiration in 1 second

**CT** – Computerized Axial Tomogram

### BIOMECHANICS

**Bending** – Angular deformation of a structure, caused by a bending moment.

**Bending Moment** – The moment that tends to bend a structure. It is usually the sum of the moments due to several forces.

**Centre of Gravity** – The point in a body in which the body mass is centred.

**Compression Force** – A force that tends to shorten a structure or material.

**Compressive Stress** – A normal stress that tends to shorten material.

**Force** – An action that causes a body to displace or deform (Newtons – N).

**Moment** – The sum of the forces applied to a structure multiplied by their perpendicular distance from a reference point or axis (Newton meters – Nm).

**Tension Force** – A force that tends to elongate a structure or material.

**Tensile Stress** – A normal stress that tends to elongate material.

**Viscoelasticity** – Material behaviour in which the resistance to deformation depends on the amount of deformation (elastic) and the rate of deformation (viscous).

## CLINICAL

**Apical disc** – The disc most deviated from the vertical axis of the patient.

**Apical vertebra** – The vertebra most deviated in the vertical axis of the patient.

**Congenital scoliosis** – Scoliosis due to congenitally anomalous vertebral development.

**End vertebra** – The most cephalad vertebra of a curve, whose superior surface or transverse axis, and the most caudal vertebra, whose inferior surface of transverse axis, tilts maximally towards the concavity of the curve.

**Iliac apophysis** – The apophysis along the crest of the ilium.

**Kyphosis** – A posterior convex angulation of the spine.

**Kyphoscoliosis** – A non idiopathic scoliosis associated with an area of hyperkyphosis.

**Neuromuscular scoliosis** – A scoliosis due to either a muscular or neurologic disorder.

**Risser sign** – In the frontal plane of the pelvis, the state of ossification of the iliac apophysis is used to denote the degree of skeletal maturity.

**Sagittal balance** – Alignment of C7 to the posterior superior aspect of the sacrum on an upright long cassette radiograph of the spine.

**Scoliosis** – A lateral curvature of the spine.

**Skeletal age** – The age obtained by comparing PA radiographs of the left wrist and hand with standards of the Gruelich and Pyle atlas.

**Vertebral tilt** – Angulation in the coronal plane, measured from the lower endplate to the horizontal.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 General

*Congenital Kyphosis*, by definition, is an anatomical vertebral anomaly which is present at birth. This anatomical vertebral anomaly forms in utero and may manifest at birth, or soon after birth. There may be other congenital abnormalities associated with it. The early occurrence of the curve results in a potentially progressive curve, as the child will have progression during the physiological growth spurts.

These curves are usually rigid, resistant to correction by external bracing; and require surgery usually to arrest their progression. If the early curves are missed at birth or in early life, severe curves develop (Figure 1). It is more difficult to treat a severe rigid curve, than a minor curve. Therefore a proper and thorough understanding of the natural history of these curves is essential, to decide the appropriate time of treatment.

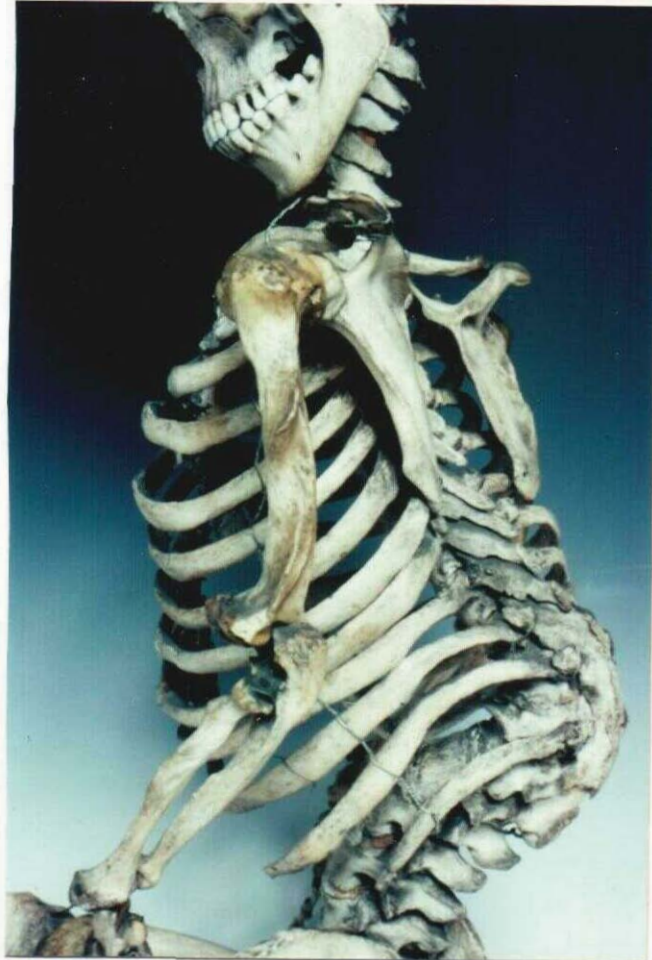


Figure 1: Kyphosis at the thoraco-lumbar level.



## 1.2 Historical Perspective

Spinal problems have been recognised in written history as far as 4500 years ago (Hughes 1988). Kyphosis, as a distinct pathological condition of the spine had been described by Hippocrates (Adams 1849, 1888), more than 2000 years ago; and surgical intervention as treatment for spinal disorders had been prescribed in early Indian surgical texts (Cumston 1926) approximately 1500 years ago. Although the clinical condition of kyphosis was recognised since early times, these descriptions could not determine the cause of the deformities. The anatomical works *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani* of Charles Estienne in 1539 and *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* by Andreas Versalius in 1543 contain the first modern and accurate anatomical descriptions of the human spine (Ball 1928). These works were the beginnings of serious study. However, there was no distinction between infective and non-infective causes of the kyphosis deformity of the spine.

The first description of congenital kyphosis as a separate entity causing spinal kyphosis was in German by Von Rokitansky in 1844. MacEwen first reported the association of untreated spinal deformity and neurological deficit in 1888. The development of radiography in 1895 enabled spinal deformities to be